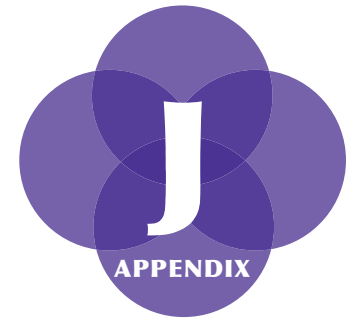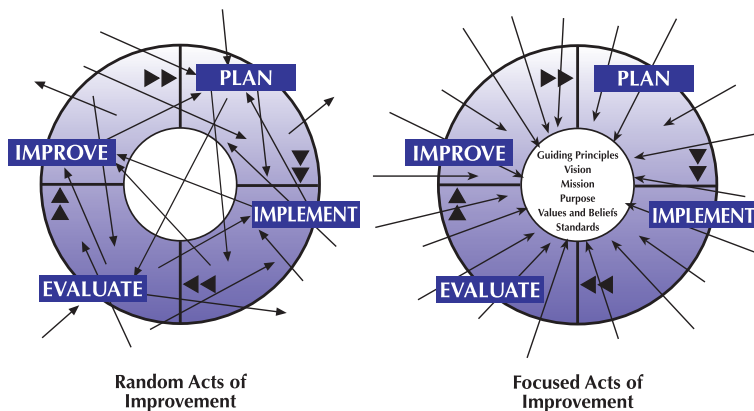# CREATING A SHARED VISION

Schools and districts must have a vision that reflects what the learning organization would *look like, sound like,* and *feel like* when it is carrying out its purpose and mission, and to keep everyone's efforts focused on the target.

To create a vision that is *truly* shared (i.e., agreed upon unanimously and understood in the same way), we must begin with the values and beliefs of individual staff members to create core values and beliefs for the school, and a core purpose and mission for the school. With core values and beliefs, purpose and mission, a vision can be created for the school. *Goals* are the outcomes of the vision.

PLAN

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

SHARED VISION

Mission

PURPOSE

Values and Beliefs

Random Acts of Improvement

Focused Acts of Improvement

The outcomes are as follows:

Create a vision—

- ♦ everyone can believe in and agree upon;
- ♦ that will lead to student achievement increases;
- ♦ that will lead to continuous improvement across the grades; and
- ♦ to which we all commit.

Prior to the visioning work, it is imperative that staff review comprehensive school data and read Best Practices related to areas of need. If staff members do not learn new ideas of meeting the needs of their students, all they will do is create the same vision—over and over. The end result will be the same.

Purpose	The purpose of this activity is to help staff create a vision that leads to commitment to what we teach, how we teach, how we assess, and how each person treats every other person, that is truly shared (i.e., committed to unanimously and understood in the same way).
Target Audience	District or school staff.
Time	Approximately 3.5 to 5 hours.
Materials	Chart pad paper, material for posting paper on the wall, markers (for each table), scissors, computer, projector, and vision worksheets, attached.
Number of Facilitators	Preferably two.

Overview

To create a vision that is truly shared—committed to unanimously and understood in the same way— we must build on the values and beliefs of the school staff members to create core values and beliefs, a core purpose, and a mission for the school. With core values and beliefs, purpose and mission, a vision can be created for the school.

We must begin with the personal and move to the collective. Systems thinker Peter Senge[1] sums up the rationale:

> *Shared visions emerge from personal visions.…*
> *This is how they derive their energy and*
> *how they foster commitment . . . .*
> *If people don't have their own vision,*
> *all they can do is "sign up" for someone else's.*
> *The result is compliance, never commitment.*

Process Protocol

To create a shared vision, gather all staff members together in a location with tables that seat 5 to 7 people.

Prior to the session, organize seating arrangements to ensure a mixture (grade level/subject area) in the small groups and to ensure that time will be used effectively. Staff members should be well-versed in the literature about what works in schools like theirs.

The steps that follow describe the process in detail. Use the *Creating a Shared Vision Guide* on the day of the vision work to assist with the documentation.

Step 1. Review Ground Rules.

- This is a safe room.
- There is no rank in this room.
- All ideas are valid.
- Each person gets a chance to speak.
- Each person gets a chance to listen.
- We are here to focus on the future.
- Our purpose is improvement, not blame.

[1]Senge, P.M. (2006), *The Fifth Discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization.* New York, NY: The Crown Publishing Group.

Process Protocol *(Continued)*

Step 2. **Determine Core Values and Beliefs.** Have the members of the group individually brainstorm and document their thoughts about: *What are the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environmental factors that support effective learning for our students?* **(10 minutes, or longer if needed)**

Compare and merge ideas in small groups. Write the ideas on poster paper. It is okay to add or to agree to ideas that were not on an individual's original list. Stick to the topic. **(15-20 minutes)**

Reconvene as a large group. Someone from each group stands next to the group's posters to note duplicates and to report. Start on one end of the room, for example, and have the reporter for the first group read all of the group's ideas about curriculum. Other groups note duplications on their poster and when it is their turn, report what they have left. Start with a different group for each category and vary the direction so each group gets maximum exposure.

Come to agreement on core values and beliefs for the school. Recorder types on a laptop so statements are displayed on the screen. **(30 minutes)**

There is no limit to the number of core values and beliefs. However, after this day, with staff approval, the Leadership Team might merge some ideas if the list is very long and overlapping.

Step 3. **Determine the Core Purpose.** Have staff members individually brainstorm and document personal ideas about the purpose of the school—do not worry about the wording at this point. **(5 minutes)**

Share individual purposes in small groups and post a common purpose with which everyone in the small group can live. **(10 minutes)**

Look for commonalities across the small group purposes with the large group. Come to agreement on a core purpose for the school. Recorder types the core purpose on the laptop. **(15-20 minutes)**

Print the core values and beliefs and purpose for each participant to use for the next steps.

Step 4. **Revisit the Mission.** Review the current mission statement. Either agree that the current mission is fine—that it reflects the purpose of the school—or assign a committee to craft the mission statement at a different time using the core values and beliefs and purpose, and bring it back to the whole staff. As long as the purpose is clear, the process can proceed without the mission statement completely written. It is the purpose that is most important. Determine who will write the mission. Use the existing mission, update it quickly, or delegate the mission to be rewritten. Move on. **(5-10 minutes)**

Step 5. **Create a Vision.** Still assembled in the large group, individuals brainstorm and document personal visions for the school in terms of what the school would *look like, sound like, feel like* if we were doing what we need to do for our children—if we are living our core values and beliefs, purpose, and mission. Identify curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environmental components. (*Note:* If the core values and beliefs are done well, the individuals will say "The vision should be our core values and beliefs," which is what we would like to see happen.) **(10 minutes)**

Share personal visions in small groups and document commonalities. It is okay to add or to agree to ideas that were not on an individual's original list. Post ideas. **(15 minutes—sometimes this step can be skipped if the note about values and beliefs holds true.)**

Process Protocol *(Continued)*

Come to agreement on the commonalities with the large group. Come to agreement on the elements of the vision for the school. Make sure everyone understands that these agreements become commitments for implementation. **(30 minutes)**

Step 6. **Determine School Goals—The Outcomes of the Vision.** There should only be two or three school goals. Again, have individuals take time to do their own thinking. **(5 minutes)**

Share individual ideas in small groups and document commonalities. **(10 minutes)**

Small groups share and merge ideas with the large group. **(15 minutes)**

Step 7. **Draft Vision Narrative and Create a Flowchart.** In addition to the specifics of the vision, it is important to write a narrative and create a flowchart about what it would *look like, sound like, feel like* if the vision was being implemented throughout the school. Brainstorm ideas, at a minimum, if this piece must be delegated to the Leadership Team to finish because of time constraints. (See *Flowcharting School Processes,* Appendix E.)

Again, give individuals a chance to think. **(5 minutes)**

Have individuals compare and combine notes in their small groups. **(15 minutes)**

Compare and combine small group notes to whole group. **(20 minutes)**

Step 8. **Answer Questions.** You might ask the staff to answer these questions if you have time after you finish the shared vision and school goals.
- This is a safe room
- There is no rank in this room
- All ideas are valid
- Each person gets a chance to speak
- Each person gets a chance to listen
- We are here to focus on the future
- Our purpose is improvement, not blame

This is probably where you will end after one day. wherever you are at the end of the day, the following will have to be completed at a later time.

Step 9. **Document.** Document the shared vision. Someone can be assigned this task, with review and agreement by the entire staff. Make sure every staff member has a copy of what has been done to this point.

Suggestion: Develop a flowchart and an assessment tool that would describe what it would look like when the vision is being implemented in the classroom and across classrooms. This will support the implementation.

Step 10. **Quality Plan.** Determine a plan to implement the vision. Include the points that follow, especially the professional learning required to implement the vision, materials to purchase, and support mechanisms for implementation, such as peer coaching. (See *Continuous School Improvement Plan,* Appendix H.*)*

Step 11. **Curriculum and Instruction.** Grade-level/subject-area teams adapt the vision into real terms for each teacher. Check across grade-level teams to ensure a continuum of learning that makes sense. (Determine a structure and time for grade-level meetings and cross-grade-level meetings.)

Process Protocol *(Continued)*

Step 12. **Leadership.** Determine a leadership structure to implement and monitor the vision. (See *Leadership Structure,* Appendix N.)

Step 13. **Professional Learning.** Create time in the work week for teachers to collaborate to implement and maintain the vision. Provide professional learning so everyone understands her/his role in implementing the vision and has the support to do it. (See *Professional Learning Calendar,* Appendix O.)

Step 14. **Partnership Development.** Determine how partnerships can help with the implementation of the vision and build them into the vision and the school plan. (See *Creating Partnerships,* Appendix P.)

Step 15. **Continuous Improvement and Evaluation.** Determine an evaluation and monitoring system, specifically to gauge implementation and success. (See *Measuring a Program or Process,* Appendix D.)

Comments to the Facilitator

This is a very action-packed time period. If you keep within the time estimates, the task will go fast and be productive. If you feel comfortable doing so, consider interspersing the time with team building activities.

An example vision is attached in Figures J-1 and J-2.

Figure J-1

EXAMPLE: Marylin Avenue Shared Vision, September 2009			
Staff began creating their vision by revisiting their values and beliefs about the *curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environmental* factors that support effective learning for Marylin Avenue students. Core (consensus) values and beliefs follow.			
MARYLIN AVENUE CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS			
Curriculum	*Instruction*	*Assessment*	*Environment*
• Essential standards unwrapped • Meaningful materials are developmentally appropriate • Modified, as appropriate • Curriculum maps • Tools (Open Court) • Vertical and horizontal alignment • Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expand Vocabulary (CAFÉ) • Freedom to use district curriculum as a tool • Research based • Use strategies instead of programs • Include fine arts • Choice and independence (social and emotional)	• RtI system • Spiraling—extra time and support because we believe all kids can learn • Focus on the four questions • Students know what they're learning, their individual goals, and why they are important • Whole group, small group, individual • Checking for understanding throughout the lesson • Background knowledge—build on it or develop it • Writing, writing, writing • Increase nonfiction • Manipulatives to build conceptual knowledge • Students on carpet for mini-lessons and guided practice • Data informed • Flexible, modified • Instructional coherence across all grade levels • All learning modalities used • Student centered • Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expand Vocabulary (CAFÉ) • Targeted instruction (Level 1) • Team time (Level 2) • Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) • Lucy Calkins • Academic language • Heads Together • Wait Time • Cooperative learning • Math/Language review • Student/individual goals • Differentiated • Daily 5 • Literacy Studio • Ample time for guided and individual practice towards mastery • Time for students to communicate and cooperate with each other • Foster thinkers	• Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) • Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) • Checking for understanding (Explicit Direct Instruction [EDI], pre-planned, non volunteer) • Timely and specific feedback. • Data teams at grade levels • Data wall—staff room • Shared protocols for assessments • Benchmarks • Constant monitoring • Administered by trained staff • Pre-assess • Content valid • Engaging multiple measures • Manageable, meaningful, valuable • Balanced with instruction • Easily supported by technology • Discreet balance with application • Students and Parents informed • Targeting instruction • Individual conferencing • Continuum (Reading, Math, Writing) • Criterion-based (skills) • Standards based	• Caring • Structured • Choice • High expectations • Safe • Void of pre-conceived notions • All staff share in responsibility for all students • Student created • FUN! • Common elements in all classrooms • Parent, Teacher, and Community Connections • Everyone is a teacher and learner • Celebrate student success • High expectations that all students can learn • Sense of urgency • Communication across grade level and within each grade level • Collegial • Collaborative • Frequent use of norms • Students feel ownership • Collaboration on curriculum, instruction, and assessment • Calm • Equitable • Goal oriented • Predictable for adults and children • Respectful for all • Everyone can succeed and grow • Love of learning instilled • Encouraging, positive • Clean, orderly, organized • Adult commitment pushes us toward improvement • Professional reading • Highly qualified teachers • Inviting • Large gathering place • Table groups • Shared materials • Class meetings • Purposeful resources, posters on wall • Awareness of student and staff needs • Basic needs met • Time for reflection

Figure J-1 *(Continued)*

EXAMPLE: Marylin Avenue Shared Vision, September 2009

Staff also revisited their mission and came to consensus on this mission statement:

THE MISSION OF MARYLIN AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
*is for **all** to develop the confidence to risk, to accept challenges, and to succeed.*
We will learn from our experiences, show compassion for others,
and grow through the joy of discovery. Learning at Marylin Avenue Elementary School
*will enable **all** to achieve their personal best and to be respectful, thoughtful, and independent learners.*

Given what their data told them about their current results, what they learned in their research studies, their core values and beliefs, and mission, Marylin Avenue staff agreed that the following curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environmental strategies would assist them in carrying out their mission.

CURRICULUM: *Marylin Avenue teachers plan instructional content and learning goals based on California State Standards.*

COMPONENTS	WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE
Curriculum is standards based.	• Teachers plan instruction that meets California state standards for literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science.
The collaborative planning of instruction, and the implementation of instruction, for Marylin Avenue students is deep, not just broad.	• All grade-level teams have defined Essential Standards and Super-Power Standards.
The collaborative planning of instruction, and the implementation of instruction, for Marylin Avenue students takes into account the prerequisite skills and concepts required for successful learning (unwrapped standards).	• All grade level teams have unwrapped the Essential and Super-Power Standards to feature the needed prerequisite skills and concepts. • As part of instruction, teachers inform students of the standard being taught, the objective of the lesson that addresses the standard, and the importance of the standard.
Instruction at Marylin Avenue School is horizontally (agreement among grade level team members) and vertically (agreement across the grades) aligned.	• Grade-level teams come to agreement about the meaning and content of standards, Essential Standards, and Super-Power Standards. • Cross-grade-level teams have aligned the Essential Standards. • Literacy Leads act as the cross-grade-level communication structure for agreement in reading and writing standards.
Curriculum is mapped and paced for the school year.	• Grade-level teams draft and agree on year-long curriculum maps to pace instruction.

Curriculum implementation is based on researched-based programs and systems.	Literacy programs and resources include:
	• District-adopted language arts program.
	• District-adopted Step Up to Writing program.
	• Systemic Instruction in Phonics and Phonemic Awareness (SIPPS).
	• Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expand Vocabulary (CAFÉ).
	
	Mathematics programs and resources include:
	• District-adopted math program.
	• Math review.
	• Specific and agreed-upon grade-level resources may include such strategies as:
	  ＊ Board language.
	  ＊ Board math.

Figure J-1 *(Continued)*

EXAMPLE: Marylin Avenue Shared Vision, September 2009	
INSTRUCTION: *Students at Marylin Avenue Elementary School are engaged in intellectually demanding tasks that require higher order and critical thinking skills.*	
COMPONENTS	**WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE**
Instruction is based on essential standards.	• Instructional coherence is in place across all grade levels.
Instruction is targeted.	• Learning objectives are based on assessments that assess student standards. • Learning objectives are clearly stated. • Students understand the importance of the learning objective. • Teachers frequently check for understanding and adjust instruction as needed.
Instruction is differentiated to address needs of students.	• Teachers plan for whole group instruction with students on the carpet for mini-lessons and guided practice. • Classroom teachers plan for small group instruction through invitational groups. • Classroom teachers plan for individual instruction through one-on-one conferences. • Students know their individual goals. • All learning styles are addressed. • Multiple exposure through multi-modality instruction. • Teachers provide additional opportunities to learn and practice essential concepts and skills.
A wide variety of instructional strategies are used.	• Effective strategies for English Language Learners include Heads Together, Cooperative Learning, and Wait Time. • Strategies focus on developing schema and building on students' background knowledge. • Tools for developing students' conceptual knowledge include manipulatives, realia, and graphic organizers. • Instruction includes math and language review. • Team time is a structure to provide additional time and support.
Schoolwide instructional practices are research based; grade-level teams agree to the levels of use for instructional practices in their collaborative planning.	Classroom practices for literacy include those supported by: • The district-adopted language arts program. • Literacy Studio management (Daily 5, First 20 Days). • Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expand Vocabulary (CAFÉ) Strategies. • Lucy Calkins: Units of Study. • Step Up to Writing. • Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)-Focus for Instruction. • Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) strategies. Classroom practices for math include those supported by: • The District-adopted math program. • Math review. • Agreed-upon grade-level specific resources.
Instruction is intellectually demanding.	Focus: • Academic language. • Nonfiction reading and writing. • Developing critical-thinking skills.

Figure J-1 *(Continued)*

EXAMPLE: Marylin Avenue Shared Vision, September 2009	
ASSESSMENT: *Marylin Avenue Staff use multiple sources of data from formative and summative assessments to target instruction and measure program effectiveness.*	
COMPONENTS	**WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE**
Our assessments are common, formative, and administered frequently.	• Grade levels agree on which assessments to administer and when. • Grade levels assess each essential standard and conduct data team meetings for most of them. • Teachers use the data from assessments to target instruction for all students. • We look at data from our assessments to determine the effectiveness of instructional strategies and programs. • Our Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) are administered by trained staff every 2 to 3 weeks.
All assessments are based on our unwrapped essential standards, and are content valid.	• Grade levels assess and conduct data team meetings for each essential standard. • All concepts and skills of essential standards are assessed. • Teachers will assess essential concepts and skills.
Assessments will be supported by technology.	• Data Director and the school server will support classroom teachers to collect and analyze data.. • Classroom teachers will receive timely support.
Results from assessments will be shared with students and parents.	• Feedback to students will be timely and specific. • Proficiency and growth will be acknowledged and celebrated on a regular basis. • Student goals will be based on assessments, and will be shared with students and parents at goal setting conferences.
Assessments must be varied.	• Multiple measures (multiple choice, short answer, essay, etc.) need to be used to accurately assess what students know and don't know.

Figure J-1 *(Continued)*

EXAMPLE: Marylin Avenue Shared Vision, September 2009	
ENVIRONMENT: *The learning environment at Marylin Avenue Elementary School is caring, inviting, and safe. It is achieved as staff members model the way for students, for each other, and for the community.*	
COMPONENTS	WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE
Learning environment is structured and predictable.	• Routines that are explicitly taught to students are in place for instructional and non-instructional environments. • Common language is used to teach academic, social, and emotional skills. • Processes and procedures are in place so the operation of the school runs smoothly. These are developed as needed. • Traditions are in place, such as the monthly Students Committed to Excellence (SCE) assembly and perfect attendance awards. • All adults implement the behavior plan so that there is consistency for children. • Days are scheduled so that our students' time is structured and predictable.
Interactions are friendly.	• We greet each other. • We greet all students. • We greet parents and members of the community.
Interactions are respectful.	• We use calm voices. • We speak quietly in the hallways and walkways. • We listen and seek to understand. • We encourage each other and cheer for each other. • We focus on the positive.
Campus is clean, orderly, and organized.	• We keep common areas free of clutter, removing obsolete items for which we are responsible. • We leave common areas cleaner than we found them. • We teach students to care for the classroom and for the campus.
Learning is engaging.	• We model the love of learning and the joy of being in school. • A variety of effective instructional strategies are used to address different learning styles. • Students have choices, as guided by teachers.
All staff members are teachers.	• We collaborate with a focus on student achievement. • We conduct ourselves in a professional, collegial manner. • We send minutes of meetings to all staff members. • We keep others informed of pertinent information. • We revise, refer to, and use our norms. • We use the issues bin and the anonymous comments envelope to voice concerns; issues are addressed promptly. • We share leadership. • We assume roles that help share the load of work. • We capitalize on and celebrate the strengths of others. • All adults take responsibility for all children.

Figure J-1 *(Continued)*

EXAMPLE: Marylin Avenue Shared Vision, September 2009	
ENVIRONMENT: *The learning environment at Marylin Avenue Elementary School is caring, inviting, and safe. It is achieved as staff members model the way for students, for each other, and for the community.*	
COMPONENTS	**WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE**
All staff members are learners.	• We set goals for our students and for ourselves. • We seek feedback from our colleagues. • We provide timely feedback to students and colleagues. • We take time to reflect on our teaching and our actions. • We identify next steps for improvement, using data to objectively guide our work. • We are continuously learning and seeking to improve. • We strive to build the capacity of students and staff.
All students can learn.	• We offer a core program, and then provide support through differentiation and flexible groupings. • We hold all students to high expectations.
All programs are equitable.	• Marylin Avenue Leadership Team (MALT), Literacy Leads, and grade level teams work towards agreements that benefit all. • Every classroom has a large meeting area, table groupings, and a classroom library. • Purposeful resources that are created with students adorn the walls, without looking like clutter. • Student work is displayed. • Student achievement is celebrated on the walls in classrooms and throughout the school.
We have a sense of community.	• Class meetings are held regularly in order to build community and to provide a voice for students. • We engage in group celebrations with student achievement in mind. • We have traditions like the costume parade, the talent show, the softball game, and field day.
We value parents.	• We facilitate parent involvement and volunteerism. • We communicate regularly through newsletters, conferences, and report cards that are translated into Spanish. • We share our mission, purpose, shared vision, and action plan with parents. • We offer avenues for feedback: perception surveys, the parent center mailbox, school site council, and meetings held after the monthly Students Committed to Excellence (SCE) assemblies. • We acknowledge and celebrate the languages and cultures that make up our school community.
Basic needs are met.	• We ensure that processes are in place through the community outreach worker, the nurse, the Child Welfare and Attendance (CWA), and the office staff.

Figure J-1 *(Continued)*

EXAMPLE: Marylin Avenue Shared Vision, September 2009
Goals are the outcomes of the vision. Given the staff's core values and beliefs, mission, and vision, the following goals represent what staff believe will result from implementing the vision.
MARYLIN AVENUE SCHOOL GOALS
• All students will exhibit their best effort for themselves, their families, and the community, including a demonstration of respect for their peers and for property. • We will create an environment where every student, family, staff member, and community member will be excited to be at Marylin Avenue School; and we will be flexible in order to accommodate the educational needs of all. • All students will be *Proficient* or *Advanced* in Language Arts and Math by the end of fifth grade. Once the vision was clear and shared, in discussion and on paper, Marylin Avenue staff created a visual of how the parts of the vision work together so all staff can understand it in the same way. The visual of Marylin Avenue's Shared Vision follows.

Figure J-2

EXAMPLE: Marylin Avenue's Shared Vision

Schoolwide data team reviews each grade level's goals, plans, and data from literacy battery three times a year. Schoolwide data team determines needed improvements in strategies/programs, effectiveness, and alignment.

Grade-level teams ensure that every teacher understands, shares, and is committed to the school vision and mission.

Grade-level teams identify essential standards for each curricular area.

Grade-level teams unwrap each essential standard for each curricular area.

Curriculum is mapped and paced for the year.

Learning objectives are created based on the attainment of essential standards assessment.

CFAs (Common Formative Assessments) are created for each essential standard and are administered every 2 to 3 weeks.

A pre-assessment is administered; the data are collected and charted.

Strengths and obstacles from the pre-assessment are analyzed.

Goals are set.

Instructional strategies are brainstormed and selected.

Teachers ensure student understanding of the importance of learning objectives.

Teachers teach each essential standard.

Teachers administer a post-assessment of each essential standard; the data are collected and analyzed.

Is student proficient with the standard? — Yes

Is student proficient with the standard? — No

In addition to regular classroom instruction, teachers re-teach each essential standard in a differentiated and targeted manner to meet the needs of the individual student.

Is student proficient with the standard? — Yes

No

In addition to regular classroom instruction, more intensive groups are used to support lower-achieving students in small groups.

Is student proficient with the standard? — Yes

No

In addition to regular classroom instruction, smaller, more intensive groups are used to support lower-achieving students in small groups.

Is student proficient with the standard? — Yes

No

Pre-referral team (PRT) meets with resource specialist, classroom teacher, Title 1 teacher, and parent—if possible. Investigate and implement strategies.

Could this child have a disability? — Yes — Refer to special education referral team (SpeRT).

No

Continue level 2 and level 3. Seek additional support PRT recommends.

Does SpeRT accept referral? — Yes — Special education evaluation begins.

No — Add SpeRT recommendation

Is student eligible for Special Education? — No

Yes — IEP developed. Services begin as outlined in IEP.

Continue with regular classroom instruction.